

Welcome to the Webinar!

School Quality: Pointed Advice and Guidance for Charter School Boards

We will be starting soon.



School Quality: Pointed Advice and Guidance for Charter School Boards

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About the Resource Center

The **U.S. Department of Education** is committed to promoting effective practices, providing technical assistance, and disseminating the resources critical to ensuring the success of charter schools across the country. To that end, the Education Department, under a contract with American Institutes for Research, has developed the **National Charter School Resource Center**.

Presenter

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School Quality: Pointed Advice and Guidance for Charter School Boards

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Today's Discussion Points:

- ▶ The most important things boards must do to improve the quality of their school
- ▶ The duty of boards to take necessary action to improve school performance
- ▶ The importance of accountability
- ▶ Examples of courageous actions boards have taken to improve school quality

The Most Important Things Boards Must Do to Improve the Quality of Their School

What can I do to improve my school?

- 1. Be an effective board!**
- 2. Know how well the school is doing**
- 3. Keep all options open**
- 4. Be proactive**

1. Be an Effective Board!



- ▶ **Focus relentlessly on student achievement**
- ▶ **Recruit and retain an exceptional leader**
- ▶ **Invest in exemplary governance**
- ▶ **Act strategically and hold the board accountable**
- ▶ **Raise and use resources wisely**
- ▶ **Commit steadfastly to legal and regulatory compliance**

Key quality levers:

- ▶ **Are the right people around your table?**
- ▶ **Does the board understand its role?**
- ▶ **Are you operating through committees?**
- ▶ **Are you evaluating your school leader every year, well?**
- ▶ **Are you goal-based?**
- ▶ **Are you evaluating your board's performance and effectiveness every year?**

2. Know How Well the School Is Doing

- ▶ You are responsible for accurately understanding the organizational, operational, and academic health of the school
 - ▶ Academic AND financial dashboards
 - ▶ At least quarterly
- ▶ **Academic committee must meet, review, and interpret data regularly, working with school leader/staff**
- ▶ **School leader cannot be the only source of information (although challenging for boards to access other info)**
- Authorizer—ensure you are getting all performance information in a timely manner; seek comparative data
- State association—seek comparative data
- Support organizations working in the school—ask for presentations/data
- Board coach/external third party—objective but informed voice
- “Audit”—hire a firm or consultant; be careful about quality and cost

3. Keep All Options Open

(and know when you might need to exercise them)

► Be realistic and clear eyed

- Not sentimental, overly loyal, or in denial

► What will we do if performance...

... declines for x years in a row?

... falls below y level?

... is persistently unacceptable to us?

► Enact “succession planning” for the school

- Just as the board should always know the plan for the next school leader and the next board chair, the board should have an eye on the next chapter for the school

3. Keep All Options Open

continued

Options include:

► School leader replacement:

- Evaluate annually
- Proactively provide support
- Have a succession plan
- Set and honor high expectations

► Internal turnaround:

- Board stays in place, school leadership and staff generally change
- External consultant often hired to run the turnaround
- Not usually effective (according to research)—problems tend to persist

3. Keep All Options Open

continued

▶ Restart:

- Students and facilities stay in place
- Board and school operator change; entirely new school except for the building
- Gaining in prominence as alternative to turnaround

▶ Closure:

- Charter is dissolved (voluntarily or not)
- Assets liquidated
- Students displaced
- Disruptive; students may end up worse off, but it honors charter bargain of accountability

4. Be Proactive

- ▶ If triggers are reached, be prepared to act on your plans
- ▶ Don't wait too long, because:
 - it will be harder to act strategically
 - your options become limited
 - it's not fair to the students
- ▶ Do the right thing. Even when it is really hard.

And Know the Legal Requirements

- ▶ Closure laws vary from state to state
- ▶ Ensure that the school knows what it is legally accountable for
 - Seek outside counsel
 - Consult with authorizer, state association, etc

Examples of Courageous Actions Boards Have Taken to Improve School Quality

What have other boards done?

- ▶ Story Number One: Replacing the School Leader
- ▶ Story Number Two: Relinquishing the charter voluntarily
- ▶ Story Number Three: Narrowing the focus to academics

Replacing the School Leader



Relinquishing the Charter Voluntarily



Narrowing the Focus to Academics



In Conclusion:

- ▶ The board is responsible and accountable for the quality of the school
- ▶ Commit to being the best charter school board there is
- ▶ Know how the school is doing at all times
- ▶ Commit to doing the right thing, no excuses
- ▶ Hold yourself and the board as a whole accountable
- ▶ Put the interests of the students first

Govern well.
Be accountable.
Lead.



Because every child
deserves a great
school.



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Questions?



Raise your hand or enter your question in the chat box
on the left side of your screen.

Thank you for participating.

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